

# Film Censorship in Franco's Spain: The Transforming Power of Dubbing

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## Abstract

Since the invention of cinema, the prominence and significance of the moving image have never been underestimated by the powers-that-be, especially, though not exclusively, in totalitarian states, where foreign films and their translations are, and have been, ideologically controlled in order to avoid any conflict with the socio-cultural values predicated by the rulers of the hosting community. This paper focuses on the dubbing into Spanish of the classical film *The Barefoot Contessa* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1954), in which glamorous Ava Gardner plays the role of a voluptuous Spanish flamenco dancer that becomes an international film star in the USA. Hollywood's appropriation and subsequent representation and internationalisation of Spanish mores and customs, embodied in the film by Ava Gardner and her Spanish family, was diametrically at odds with the values and virtues advocated by the Francoist regime (1939-1975), making this film a battleground for ideological manipulation and forcing the unleashing of a creative remediation process aimed at shrouding any criticism of Spanish interests or customs and cementing traditional values cherished by the regime.

## Keywords

Dubbing, audiovisual translation, censorship, manipulation, ideology

## 1. Introduction

People accustomed to experiencing foreign audiovisual productions in their dubbed version can easily forget the fact that what they are watching is not an original but a translation. It is this tacit suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience that makes of dubbing **an illusion** within the all-encompassing **art of illusion** that cinema is. It also justifies, to a large extent, this lack of awareness that the dialogue has been filtered through the target language, and that ideology and censorial forces may have had a crucial impact on the translation of that film.

That Spain lived under Franco's dictatorship from 1939 to 1975 is well known by almost every Spanish citizen. **What is** not so widely known is the extent to which the regime's ideology influenced the final outcome of a vast number of films exhibited in the country at the time. For many, Francoist censorship was primarily limited to the scissoring out of some scenes and the sporadic suppression or sanitising of taboo expressions. However, as claimed by Vandaele (2002), 'textual shifts could also be more subtle, but nonetheless efficient through their consistency' (p. 279). As the film industry is a complex one with high social repercussion and in which numerous stakeholders participate, interferences can be instigated by many agents and can materialise at many levels: producer, director, distributor, translator, dialogue writer, dubbing director, TV station, age rating boards and other government agencies.

A number of cinema scholars have written about the intricacies of censorship in Franco's Spain. Gubern and Font (1975) rightly point out that film censorship affects domestic and imported works alike and is not restricted to some cuts in a ministerial department but, rather, it is a much more pervasive operation. It begins when directors or scriptwriters decide to reject a scene, an image or an utterance because they fear the project will not be otherwise authorised by a particular organism. The producer/distributor may also modify or discard certain parts in the script/film to deflate potential confrontation with the authorities. When dealing with foreign films, translators, dialogue writers, dubbing directors and voice talents are also active participants in the process, taking decisions that will affect the textual make-up of the target dialogue. And in the case of many past and current governments, censors will be invested with the power to instruct the instantiation of certain changes so that the end product adheres to any given socio-political agenda.

## 2. Manipulation and censorship

Since the manipulation turn of the late 1980s, translation has come a long way to be understood as a form of rewriting, i.e. an activity that reflects a given ideology and implies the manipulation, to varying degrees, of the original text in the service of the powers that be. Far from being a mere act of faithful mimesis, authors like Gentzler and Tymoczko (2002) conceive translation as a powerful communicative undertaking that, guided by ideology, contributes to the creation of knowledge and the shaping of culture. As a force of innovation, manipulation can be considered as positively energising, while, on the other side of the coin, it can also be perceived negatively when it is used to repress innovation, or to wilfully distort and alter information contained in the original. Of course, the reception of the translated product hinges on the ideological values subscribed by the viewers themselves and what some may welcome positively, others may criticise as noxious. For authors like Lefevere (1992), this conundrum is difficult to resolve since ‘translators have to make decisions over and over again on the levels of ideology, poetics, and universe of discourse, and those decisions are always open to criticism from readers who subscribe to a different ideology’ (p. 88). The situation gets compounded in the case of totalitarian regimes, where translators’ choices are severely restricted and, in their assumed allegiance to the State, they are expected to maintain and reinforce the ideological uniformity of the target culture. Yet, translation is not always a threat to cultures and some productions are precisely chosen to be translated because they inculcate and reinforce the values propagandised by the regime.

In academic exchanges, the term *manipulation* is inextricably intertwined with notions like *power*, *control* and *ideology* and tends to be used interchangeably as a synonym of *censorship*. In this respect, some terminological clarification may prove useful. As discussed by Díaz-Cintas (2012), in the specific field of audiovisual translation, manipulation can be triggered in response to some of the space and time constraints imposed by the medium – e.g. the need to respect lip-sync and isochrony in dubbing (Chaume, 2012) –, in which case any ensuing textual dislocation can be deemed to be necessary and justified from a technical perspective. As opposed to this technical manipulation, ideological manipulation is normally instigated by agents in a position of power (e.g. board of censors, film producers) and consists in the incorporation in the target production of modifications (including deletions and additions) that deliberately depart from the semantic meaning of the original and unscrupulously misconstrue what is being said (or shown) in the original. The reasons behind this behaviour may obey commercial and economic imperatives or be of a more ideological nature and respond to political, religious, moral, or sexual motives. Censorship belongs to this latter, more repressive form of manipulation, which involves the premeditated falsification of information, is usually institutionalised, and is the main focus of the argumentation canvassed in these pages. From this perspective, all censorship is manipulation but not all manipulation can be considered censorship.

Since the invention of the cinema, the power of moving images has never been underestimated by those at the helm of power. Oppressive regimes not only coerce population by force, but also by regulation and, in the name of homogeneous identity and patriotism, any religious, sexual, ethnic, and political dissonances are suppressed. Totalitarian states particularly, though not uniquely, have always felt the need for a strict, precise and centralised control of cinema to make it conform to their patriotic rules and their socio-cultural values. And although many would like to believe that censorship is a thing of the past, it cannot be forgotten that it is still pervasive in many countries around the globe.

In the following section, a brief account is provided of the historical background against which censorship was activated during the Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975) in order to control the translation and exhibition of foreign films, in the belief that by understanding the causes (i.e. the socio-political and economic circumstances) the effects (i.e. the translations) can be better explained and appreciated.

## 2.1 The Origins of Film Translation

The arrival of the talkies at the end of the 1920s would soon become a headache for filmmakers, distributors and the audience in general. Whilst silent films had instilled the false credence that cinematic language was a sort of universal Esperanto that could be easily understood internationally, the advent of sound acted as a sharp reminder of the linguistic diversity that separates countries and cultures, and risked jeopardising the reach of USA films in the world. Audiences in France, Germany, Italy and Spain raised their voices against the dominance of American English and, out of national pride, started to demand films in their own language (Izard, 1992; Vincendeau, 1998). As a result, an incipient, domestic film industry started to flourish in these countries, where protectionist barriers were also raised, in the form of import quotas and licenses, in an attempt to curb the influx of films from the mighty Hollywood powerhouse.

To avoid losing their hegemonic dominance, and to maintain their financial gains, the large USA distribution companies decided to find translation solutions that would allow them to bridge linguistic barriers and keep a firm grip on the international markets. After a short-lived period of unsuccessful experimentation with the production of so-called multilingual versions – whereby films were shot in different languages, keeping the same locations and settings but usually employing different actors that could speak the foreign language –, the more popular dubbing and subtitling appeared on screen.

As discussed by Ballester Casado (2001), the technological developments that took place at the beginning of the 1930s and guaranteed a better quality of sound, led to the consolidation of dubbing as one of the dominant translation practices at the time, which has continued to this day. The fact that large swathes of the population in Europe were illiterate also contributed to its deep rooting in society. Yet, the invention of dubbing was not without its upheavals as many in the cinema industry saw it as a development with pernicious consequences for the commercial success of domestic productions, now that the famous celebrities starring in the USA films could speak the very same language of the target audience (Cornu, 2014). In the case of Spain, Higginbotham (1988) claims that Spanish viewers had always preferred silent movies made in their own country, but with the advent of the talkies and the introduction of dubbing, a deluge of movies from the USA started to flood the Spanish screens. The immediate impact was that, “[t]he Hollywood star system literally outshone the home product, so that Spaniards deserted their national cinema in droves. This preference only increased in the post-Civil War years” (p. 4).

Coinciding in time, the socio-political situation in Europe entered a convulsive period that would end up in the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and World War II (1939-1945), preceded and followed by the rise of fascist regimes in various European countries, whose leaders soon realised the effectiveness of dubbing as a control mechanism. The ease with which images could be excised and foreign dialogue purged of undesirable references, by substituting it with a cleansed version in the target language, proved immensely alluring for the young dictatorships.

Historical accounts of how censorial forces have shaped the translation of audiovisual programmes in different countries, particularly through dubbing, have been conducted by authors like Pruys (1997) in Germany, Fabre (2007) and Mereu (2016) in Italy, and Ávila (1997), Garnemark (2015), Gutiérrez Lanza (1999, 2002) and Vandaele (2002) in Spain. The work carried out by the research group Tralima (Traducción,

Literatura y Medios Audiovisuales, [www.ehu.es/tralima](http://www.ehu.es/tralima)), a continuation from the precursor TRACE group (TRANslations CEnsored, [www.ehu.es/trace](http://www.ehu.es/trace)), has been instrumental in unravelling the linguistic and socio-cultural mechanisms that characterise the translation of literature and audiovisual programmes under the censorial powers operating in Spain between 1939 and 1985. Similar in scope, though not so singularly focussed on translation, is the project *Italia Taglia* ([www.italiataglia.it](http://www.italiataglia.it)), a multimedia archive containing information about all the audiovisual material that has been subjected to censorial intervention in Italy since 1913.

## 2.2 Film Censorship in Franco's Spain

Film censorship in Spain did not begin with Franco's dictatorship, as some may think, but as early as cinema itself. As Gubern and Font (1975) argue, the country was an excellent breeding ground for censorship because of the steadfast conservatism and deep catholic beliefs of Spanish society at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Officially, film censorship started to operate in 1913. But it is the fact that the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the subsequent dictatorship (1939-1975) coincided in time with the consolidation of dubbing, which makes it such a fascinating epoch for the study of socio-political manipulation of discourse through the analysis of the dynamics of foreign films censorship. As foregrounded by Carr and Fusi (1979), cinema, together with radio and TV, contributed to the creation during the dictatorship of a subculture that was politically and culturally innocuous and functioned as a safety valve of social and economic tensions.

By contrast with the shorter-lived dictatorial regimes of Germany and Italy, in Spain, the only undefeated fascist government in Europe continued to exercise a rigorous control over film for over forty years. Following Gubern and Font (1975), the evolution of censorship during these decades shows five distinct periods.

### *1937-1945: Germanisation, defence of Castilian and arbitrariness*

The first effort of the Franco regime to exert control over films began as a wartime measure when in 1937 the *Junta Superior de Censura Cinematográfica* [Superior Board of Film Censorship] was established, consisting of representatives from the fascist political party Falange, the Church, and the Army. Their decisions were irrevocable and, as no concrete criteria or instructions on censorship were available, arbitrary rulings were rather common. In 1939, the submission of scripts for censorship prior to shooting a domestic film was made compulsory. Rather tellingly, the first official decree establishing that all books had to be submitted to a censorship board was not issued until 1943, foregrounding the authorities' interest in cinema over literature as a much more powerful means to control the masses.

Given the political affinity between the two countries, by the end of 1941, German interests were controlling key media outlets in Spain like newspapers, radio stations, distribution companies and movie theatres. German cinema, including its censorship system, was taken as a model and given certain prerogatives in terms of import quotas and permissiveness of censors. Films from the USA, on the other hand, were seen as an expression of decadence by the State, even though they continued to be the favourite of the audience. Emulating the examples set by Italy and Germany, the Spanish Ministry of Industry and Trade issued, on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1941, an *Orden Ministerial* [ministerial bill] requiring the obligatory dubbing into Castilian Spanish of all foreign productions, which had to be carried out by Spanish professionals working for companies operating in national territory. Such a decision meant not only the suppression of other home languages like Catalan, Basque and Galician, but also the vanishing of subtitling from the silver screen. Dubbing thus became the perfect tool for the Francoist regime to manipulate the content of

foreign productions and to reaffirm the unity and national identity of the country through language. As claimed by Danan (1991), dubbing represents ‘an assertion of the supremacy of the national language and its unchallenged political, economic and cultural power within the nation’s boundaries’ (p. 612).

By the end of 1942, given the evolution of World War II, its uncertain outcome and the evident decline of Germany, the import of more USA films was allowed, both as a cunning political act but also as a safe bet to secure the financial viability of cinema by keeping abreast with the audience interests. The following table, from Gubern and Font (1975, p. 43), illustrates the quick penetration of USA films in Spain:

Country	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Germany	34	71	50	8	8	12	12
United Kingdom	4	16	13	18	21	17	17
USA	56	77	45	28	61	120	138

### *1946-1950: The autarchy*

During this period, the Catholic Church acquired more power on the different censorship boards and, in a move that confirmed its privileged position with respect to other social groups, no session could be held without the presence of a cleric. The first ever Spanish written code of censorship guidelines was drafted by ecclesiastic authorities and approved in 1950, with the aim of providing a unified set of moral guidelines to regulate artistic performances. Films were awarded a moral grade out of five: (1) Authorised for all audiences including children; (2) authorised for young people, up to 21 years of age; (3) authorised for adults over 21 years of age; (3R) for adults, with reservations; and (4) seriously dangerous. Although these ratings were merely advisory and not intended to be used by civil censorship boards, ‘Catholic critics and journalists were obliged to include the moral grades of films in their reviews and listings, and it was the spectators’ own moral duty to be properly informed before seeing the shows’ (Gutiérrez Lanza, 2002, p. 146).

### *1951-1962: The chastity of Spain*

Clerical and ultraconservative, the new minister for Education and Tourism gave the Church even more power to censor any aspects that could be considered a threat against catholic dogma and morality. In 1952, a new *Junta de Clasificación y Censura* [Classification and Censorship Board] was created with the remit to censor national and foreign films and to grade them. The members representing the Church often disagreed with the State guidelines, which they considered too tolerant, and managed to ban films that had been previously approved by the Board. However, Spanish mores were evolving and some voices of discontent started to be raised. In 1955, a group of young cineastes held the so-called *Conversaciones de Salamanca* [Salamanca Talks], where they complained about the situation of the Spanish cinema defining it as ‘politically inefficient, socially false, intellectually appalling, aesthetically non-existent and industrially paltry’ (García Rodrigo & Rodríguez Martínez, 2005, p. 122, my translation), whilst demanding a new, clearer censorship code with the possibility of appealing against the Junta’s decisions.

### *1962-1969: The aperture period*

The triumvirate Falange-Army-Church created in 1937 was changed to Police-Education-Church in 1962 and the long-awaited official code for film censorship was published in 1963. These guidelines covered a wide range of topics (religious, moral, sexual, socio-

political, and aesthetics) and they expressly banned, among others, the justification of suicide, homicide, revenge, divorce, adultery, illicit sexual relationships, prostitution, abortion, contraception, sexual deviations, drugs, alcoholism, religious offences, and any attacks against the Catholic Church, the state and its representatives. Despite the code, arbitrary decisions were common given the ambiguous way in which some of the norms were written, like Norm 10, which stipulated that 'images and scenes that may provoke low passions in the normal viewer [...] will be forbidden' (Gubern & Font, 1975, p. 110, my translation). Foreign films that had been previously banned were now allowed such as *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955) or *I vitelloni* (Federico Fellini, 1953). In response to the changing times, the *salas de arte y ensayo* [art cinema screenings] were created in 1967. Located in cities with a population of over fifty thousand inhabitants, these new theatres screened foreign films with subtitles and domestic films of special interest that could not be seen in mainstream cinemas.

#### *1969-1974: Between perpetuation and change*

In contrast with the censorial homogeneity, even if apparent, of the previous years, and given the advanced age of the dictator, the last of the five periods distinguished by Gubern and Font (1975) is characterised by uncertainty and instability. The reinstatement of the most traditional standards of decency in the final years of the dictatorship led to the disappearance in 1971 of the recently created special theatres and to the weekend pilgrimage of Spanish viewers to the south of France, where they could watch erotic films banned in Spain.

#### *1975-onwards: The end of censorship (?)*

After the death of Franco in 1975, and the subsequent arrival of democracy, censorship was abolished in the country and confirmed in the Spanish Constitution of 1978, though, according to authors like Merino Álvarez (2009), the last traces of its impact can still be found until 1985. Needless to accentuate that the *de iure* eradication of censorship does not **forfe**nd its *de facto* existence.

The sections that follow concentrate on the classical film *The Barefoot Contessa*, which contains some of the most recurrent taboos for the Spanish censors – from references to the Civil War to adulterous relations – and whose analysis unravels the changes that took place during the dubbing of the movie into Spanish. To a large extent, the dubbed version of the film epitomises the censorial and manipulative practices typical of the period under scrutiny and reflects the attitude of the regime towards those films that were at odds with the moral precepts preached by the dictatorship.

### **3. *The Barefoot Contessa***

*The Barefoot Contessa*, a film written, directed and produced by Joseph L. Mankiewicz in 1954, tells the story of Maria Vargas (Ava Gardner), a voluptuous Spanish flamenco dancer who becomes an internationally acclaimed film star in the USA.

Told in flashback, the first scene takes place at Maria Vargas's funeral, where several people recall who she was and the impact she had on them. Scouting talent for an upcoming film, Harry Dawes (Humphrey Bogart), a not very successful scriptwriter/director and recovering alcoholic, together with Hollywood producer Kirk Edwards (Warren Stevens) and publicist Oscar Muldoon (Edmond O'Brien) travel to Madrid to scope renowned local dancing sensation Maria Vargas. Born and raised amid the bombs of the Spanish Civil War, she is hounded by an abusive mother and though distrustful at their first encounter, she is soon convinced by Harry to accept the offer to go to Hollywood and

chance an acting career. Her first movie becomes an instant international hit but disaster strikes when her father murders her mother. Against the advice of the Hollywood studio, she returns to Spain to defend her father in court from a homicide charge, of which he is absolved, and she is able to capture public approval with her honesty.

An iconic megastar, she struggles to find happiness first with Edwards and then with his Latin American rival, Alberto Bravano (Marius Goring). She can only trust and confide in Harry and occasionally enjoys the discreet company of her 'cousin', who has followed her to the USA. In a trip to the French Riviera, she meets count Vincenzo Torlato-Favrini (Rossano Brazzi), whom she marries in the belief that he is her long-awaited knight in shining armour. It is only on her wedding night that the count tells her that he was injured in the war and cannot fulfil his marital duties with her. The impossibility of having descendants and the prospect of his lineage disappearing after his death prompt Maria to take a lover so that she can get pregnant and make Vincenzo happy with an heir to the family. In her last encounter with her lover, Vincenzo follows her to their secret *rendez-vous* and kills them both. Without any regrets, he calls the police and gives himself up. The circle gets completed when we see Harry again at Maria's funeral.

### 3.1 Beyond the plot

The film, praised by many critics for its glamour and extravagance, is a caustic and cynical satire on the glittering and corrupt behaviour of the Hollywood entertainment elite but, most importantly, is the portrayal of a woman who rises from poverty to become an international sex symbol and marry into royalty while always keeping true to her humble roots. Through all this dazzling upward spiral, we are told that she stays a simple, barefoot girl, odd in her choice of amorous partners but forever spiritually pure, despite being surrounded by morally poisonous men. The film is similar, but perhaps not as successful as *All about Eve* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950), in its attempt at (de)mythologizing a movie star through multiple perspectives, flashbacks and different characters. Considered by many a roman-à-clef, this way of storytelling from the viewpoint of several male characters makes it somewhat complex to follow. Its reception was irregular and while in the USA it was criticised for being confusing and excessively verbose, in France and Spain the film was well received by the audience and the critics (Delgado Barrio, 2016).

Even though Mankiewicz had to accept the suggestions by the USA censors to transform the count's homosexuality into a case of impotence caused by war injuries, the film diegesis still contains numerous, recurrent themes and allusions to topics that were the battleground of the Spanish censors at the time: the depiction of a Spanish woman whose childhood had been marked by the bombs of the Civil War and her mother's cruelty, a father who kills his wife and is acquitted in court, a friend who has been married and divorced three times, an impotent husband, various adulterous relationships with different 'cousins', an extramarital pregnancy, and a murder of passion caused by the husband's jealousy. The situation gets compounded by Hollywood's appropriation and subsequent representation and internationalisation of Spanish mores and customs, embodied in the film by Ava Gardner and her Spanish family, which was diametrically at odds with the values and virtues advocated by the Francoist regime. With these plot credentials, it is rather mystifying not only that the film was not rejected outright by the censorship board but that it actually made it through the censorial labyrinth reasonably quickly and was given the most advantageous rating possible, i.e. *autorizada para todos los públicos* [suitable for all viewers].

The reasons behind such an outcome have to be multifarious and can only be hypothesised. However, the attraction exerted by Ava Gardner in the Spanish psyche of the time together with her magnetism to lure large numbers of viewers and, hence, boost box office gross, have to be at the top of the list. At 32, Ava Gardner was in the splendour

of her beauty – this was the film that earned her the tag ‘the world’s most beautiful animal’ –, had just finished starring in *Mogambo* (John Ford, 1953), for which she had been nominated for an Oscar, and was in the midst of a turbulent marriage to Frank Sinatra that monopolised the cover pages of the society magazines. Indeed, she was hugely popular in a country where her wanton lifestyle was a source of fascination to a population still under the yoke of an authoritarian dictatorship. She first arrived in Spain in 1950 to star in the film *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* (Albert Lewin, 1951) and immediately fell in love with the country. She had a personal passion for Spain, where she was great friends with writer Ernest Hemingway, and after the shooting of *The Barefoot Contessa* she decided to settle in Madrid, where she lived from 1955 until 1968. A carefree lifestyle, late-night drinking dens, flamenco *tablaos*, bullfights and her tempestuous, public liaisons with bullfighters like Mario Cabré and Luis Miguel Dominguín – all duly documented in Isaki Lacuesta’s *La noche que no acaba* (*All Night Long*, 2010) – could not pass unnoticed in a country scarred by the Civil War and by a pathetically moralising dictatorship. The attraction of such a megastar was doubtless a guarantee for the commercial success of a film starring Ava and a safe financial bet for the distributors and exhibitors.

### 3.2 The dubbing of the film

Though spoken in English, the film’s nationality is Italian and it was imported into Spain as part of the quota allowed under the Hispano-Italian agreement in force at the time. According to the records kept in the Administration’s General Archive (AGA) – the richest source of information on Franco’s censorship, located in Alcalá de Henares, near Madrid –, the import license was issued on 10 November 1954 to the distribution company C.B. Films S.A. Four months later, on 24 March 1955, the film was submitted to the board of censors and on 17 May 1955 it received the first category classification, i.e. suitable for all viewers. In their submission to the board, the distributors had to itemise, under oath, the nature of the cuts, suppressions and any other modifications voluntarily introduced to the film, to which they added an appendix with a synopsis of a radically new plot, examples of which will be discussed in the sections below. The film hit the silver screens in January 1956.

Admittedly, the files kept by the AGA are sketchy and incomplete but they seem to indicate that the first dubbed script submitted to the authorities was accepted without further ado. This, in turn, highlights the pragmatic approach of the distributors, who, to keep their negotiations with the censorship board to a minimum, so as to avoid unnecessary delays and speed the launch of the film, adopted a preliminary self-censorship approach and excised all the lines and scenes that could prove problematic. Against this backdrop, it is plausible that translators also activated their own self-censorship mechanisms during the translation in order to pre-empt further changes by the censors. Previous verdicts by the *Junta* about other films would have ended up ‘teaching’ the translators what could, and could not be said, and how. Authors like Ávila (1997) and Ballester Casado (2001) have discussed self-censorship in the case of dubbing in Spain though, from an analytical viewpoint, it is rather difficult – if not impossible – to demonstrate which manipulative changes that surface in the translation are indeed due to translators’ self-censorship, or were actually imposed by other agents, e.g. the distributors.

The dubbed version of the film used for the analysis herewith is the one found on the DVD commercialised in 2004 by MGM and directed by Félix Acaso, which is the original one enjoyed by viewers when the film was first launched for its theatrical release in 1956. The 128 minute movie was shortened to 125 minutes in its Spanish transformation, by express instruction of the censors who requested the suppression of various shots where Ava appears in her swimming costume on board a yacht, as well as a scene where her ‘cousin’ visits her in Hollywood. As the diegesis was so heavily manipulated, both at



micro and macro levels, the Spanish public service broadcaster, *Televisión Española* (TVE), commissioned a redubbing of the film in 1972, directed by José Luis Sansalvador, which was also used for the VHS copy distributed by Warner Bros. A comparison between both versions could be most illuminating but, unfortunately, all efforts to find a copy of the redubbing have proved futile. The information offered on *eldoblaje.com*, the largest online database about dubbing in Spain, does not specify the name of any of the translators of these two versions. The film was also dubbed into Catalan, as *La comtessa descalça*, for its broadcasting by *Televisió de Catalunya* (TV3) in October 1991, presumably uncensored.

Generally speaking, most censored films that made it to the cinema screens would maintain the narrative structure of the original version, and both the plot and the construction of the characters would be respected to a large extent, with changes infiltrating the dialogue at phrase and sentence levels. However, in *The Barefoot Contessa* the story has been altered to such a degree that the dubbed and the original versions can be said to be two completely different films. To this metamorphosis contributed the numerous, minor and major changes detected in the translation.

### 3.3 Censorship in action

As discussed, censorship was guided by two main priorities: (1) to instil and maintain a decent morality, by controlling sexual antics, improper use of language, and religious beliefs; and (2) to avoid the infiltration of seditious political ideas at odds with the regime.

According to the *Catecismo Patriótico Español* [Patriotic Spanish Catechism] the authority of the head of the state was invested by God and assisted by the Catholic Church. It comes then as no surprise that the Church would spread its tentacles over every political institution, including the Censorship Board, keeping a watchful eye over any potential blasphemous or negative reference that could be construed to go against their ideology. Censors would also use translation as a pedagogical tool in their proselytising mission to spread Catholic dogma.

In a veiled warning to Kirk, Harry recounts the legend of Faust, who turned away from God and made a pact with the devil. Then, instead of referring to the traditional ending, i.e. that God won over the devil and Faust gained eternal damnation, Harry shows a more subversive, personal interpretation of the tale:

Example 1. Religious reference

<b>Original</b>	Harry: Most people think God won. I personally always thought it wound up a draw.	
	<b>Dubbed</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
	Una vez más triunfó Dios. Es símbolo del triunfo eterno de la fe sobre el pecado.	Once more God won. It is a symbol of the eternal triumph of faith over sin.

Such deviant construal could not pass the censorial sieve and the opportunity was taken to reinstate the conventional ending and hyperbolically reinforce the power of God in a most patronising manner. This way, not only have the Catholic values been safeguarded, but the audience will also be led to believe that such Christian stance is also embraced by people beyond the Spanish borders.

In a staunch Catholic society such as the one fostered by Franco, where divorce was forbidden, Harry's dissipated love life, materialised in three marriages with the implicit divorces, was anathema and had to be hidden from the viewers. Acknowledging instead that he is broke cements the image being portrayed from the beginning of the film that he is a loser:

Example 2. Three wives

<b>Original</b>	Harry: Me? Well, I'm afraid I've had three wives.	
	<b>Dubbed</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
	¿Cómo? Bueno, mi caso es distinto, no tengo un céntimo.	What? Well, my case is different, I haven't got a penny.

After the festering Civil War, there was no reconciliation between the two opposing bands, but rather humiliation of the defeated group. The ultimate aim of the dictatorship was to unify the nation and the collective way of thinking within the parameters of an autocratic state. It was thus essential to eliminate and erase the ideas of the opponents and to impose a homogenous and unique ideology by force and by means of a robust censorship mechanism. References to the conflict in foreign films were treated with suspicion, particularly because many of them tended to be approbative of the republican side and depicted the ensuing impoverished social environment that the regime so wanted to hide.

Explaining her preference for walking barefoot, Maria remembers her childhood as follows:

#### Example 3. Civil War

<b>Original</b>	Maria: When I was a little girl [...] there was no money to buy shoes for me. And when the bombs came, in the Civil War, I used to bury myself in the dirt of the ruins to be safe.	
	<b>Dubbed</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
	Quando yo era una niña [...] no podían comprarme zapatos. En mi casa eran pobres; la vida muy dura. Yo acostumbraba a mirar los escaparates de las zapaterías. Así huía de los gritos de mi madrastra.	When I was a girl [...] they couldn't buy me shoes. At home, they were poor; life was harsh. I used to watch the shop windows of the shoe stores. That way, I could escape from my stepmother's screams.

In the reconstructed dialogue, 'the bombs', 'the Civil War', 'the dirt of the ruins' along with the funereal tones of the verb 'to bury myself' have all been concealed from the viewers, who are now confronted with a life of hardship in which the 'ruins' have been transformed into shoe stores with alluring shop windows. Most crucially, one of the major stratagems to make the film palatable to the censors is incubated in this scene, where the figure of the mother becomes the stepmother. In the original version, Maria's mother is pernicious, full of hatred and ends up being killed by Maria's father. The ultrareligious and ultraconservative family ideal venerated by the dictatorship had the mother as its coalescing symbol and could not condone the representation of an evil mother. Once the lie has entered the plot, it must be maintained in subsequent scenes so that overall coherence is not jeopardised (Examples 4 and 5), even if this means bypassing the technical convention of maintaining synchrony with the original utterances, as illustrated in example 4, where two exchanges (in bold) that do not have a counterpart in the original, have been added in the dubbed version:

#### Example 4. Stepmother

<b>Original</b>	Harry: After all, a girl likes to have her mother with her, right? Maria: I would not like to have my mother with me because I do not like my mother. Harry: I'm sure you don't mean that. Every mother should be loved. Maria: If they deserve it.	
	<b>Dubbed</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
	Harry: Es natural que desee tener a su madre con usted, ¿cierto? Maria: Tan cierto como imposible que pueda llevármela. <b>Harry: ¿Por qué?</b> <b>Maria: Ha muerto, ahora vivo con mi madrastra.</b>  Harry: Tampoco veo inconveniente, podrá llevarse a su madrastra. Maria: No me interesa.	Harry: It is natural that you wish to have your mother with you, isn't it true? Maria: As true as it is impossible that I can take her with me. <b>Harry: Why?</b> <b>Maria: She's dead. Now, I live with my stepmother.</b>  Harry: I don't see any inconvenience either, you can take your stepmother with you. Maria: I'm not interested.

Example 5. Stepmother (in court)

<b>Original</b>	Harry: [Maria] told about the squalor and filth into which she and her brother were born and how they grew up like animals. She told about a mother who was full of hate and how she got back the hate she gave.	
	<b>Dubbed</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
	[María] habló de la pobreza en que nacieron y se criaron ella y su hermano, de su desconsuelo al morir su madre, del odio de su madrastra que convirtió el hogar en un infierno. Dijo que su padre era bueno pero débil.	[Maria] spoke about the poverty into which she and her brother were born, and their grief after their mother's death, of their hate towards their stepmother who transformed their home into hell. [She] said that their father was good but weak.

In a peculiar way, the addition of the cruel stepmother, a character so typical in children's fairy tales, works in favour of the metaphorical scaffolding behind the new plot woven by the translator. As the original film makes numerous references to *Cinderella* and establishes a direct parallel between Maria Vargas and the protagonist of the fable, the appropriation of the stepmother figure is innocuously embedded into the story and helps strengthen the associations with the folk tale.

The film is corroded by a myriad of small but recurrent changes whose aim is the transmission, inculcation, and perpetuation of certain dominant values. Thus, a statement like 'I always thought that a woman was a two-time thing', uttered by a female aspiring actor, becomes a more preachy *yo creía que las mujeres habían nacido para obedecer* [I thought women had been born to obey]. In the scene at the casino in the Italian Riviera, a marginal character from the international jetset, who is addressed by everybody else as 'king', is transformed into a *duque* [duke] to avoid any political reference to the at-the-time thorny issue of the monarchy.

Surprised by the benevolence of the judges for setting Maria's father free after having killed his wife, Harry delivers the following sarcastic remark about the judicial system in Spain:

Example 6. Judges

<b>Original</b>	Harry: They must be appointed in Spain because I don't know of anybody ever getting elected whose mother was not an angel. And, as it turned out, the audiences of the whole world could have been sitting in that courtroom. From Scarsdale to Singapore they loved her.	
	<b>Dubbed</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
	[Los jueces] eran sensibles al mismo tiempo que justos y una vez examinados los extremos de las declaraciones, dieron su veredicto, el mismo que hubieran emitido los tribunales del mundo entero desde Nueva York a Singapur, dando la vuelta al globo.	[The judges] were sensitive as well as just and once the declarations had been examined, they gave their verdict, the same that would have been given by all courts in the whole world from New York to Singapore, going round the globe.

To gain the support of the authorities, the major distorting changes take place towards the end of the film, where the count's passion crime has to be justified from a narrative point of view, albeit safeguarding the moral stature of the Spanish celebrity. Taking advantage of Harry's visit to the Riviera, Maria meets up with him and soon starts to share intimate confidences. A flashback recounts how, on her wedding night, her husband had confessed to her that he was impotent due to a war injury and could not fulfil his conjugal duties, leaving her alone in their matrimonial bedroom. The despair of his avowal does not diminish her love for him but it does eventually lead her to find a lover, which she confesses to Harry, upon his instigation, in the following exchange:

Example 7. Lover

<b>Original</b>	<p>Harry: Tell me, how long could you stand it?          Maria: What do you mean?          Harry: How long could you stand it?          Maria: As long as I could.          Harry: And who is the lucky peasant? The gardener or his son? The chauffeur, the stable boy?          Who's the contessa's cousin this week?          Maria: Harry, I couldn't help myself.          Harry: Neither could he! [...] How are you going to make him happy? By more of the same until you get caught?</p>	
	<b>Dubbed</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
	<p>Harry: Dime, ¿esos celos serán infundados?          Maria: ¿Qué supones?          Harry: ¿No le habrás dado motivos?          Maria: Le quiero demasiado para eso.          Harry: Entonces, ¿por qué no le dejas de una vez? Si es injusto, si te atormenta, si no puede hacerte feliz, ¿por qué no vuelves a tu trabajo, a tu vida?          María: No tienes derecho a aconsejarme eso.          Harry: Sí tengo derecho [...] Dime, ¿cómo puedes hacerle feliz? Infundadas o no, ¿cómo puedes evitar sus sospechas?</p>	<p>Harry: Tell me, that jealousy must be unfounded?          Maria: What do you think?          Harry: You haven't given him any reasons?          Maria: I love him too much to do that.          Harry: Then, why don't you leave him once and for all? If [he] is unjust, if [he] torments you, if he cannot make you happy, why don't you go back to your work, to your life?          Maria: You have no right to advise me that.          Harry: I have the right [...] Tell me, how can you make him happy? Unfounded or not, how can you avoid his suspicions?</p>

Ava Gardner is depicted in the film as an innocent in the woods yet in 1950s style movie subtlety she was having affairs with her 'cousin', a gypsy, and her chauffeur. Harry's explicit remarks about the 'cousin' and her other extramarital affairs are wiped out and transformed into a conversation in which Maria's unremitting love for her husband is ungratefully reciprocated by a mistrustful, jealous count, which in turn bolsters the stereotype of the macho Italian man. In Harry's advice to leave him and in Maria's categorical refusal to abandon her husband despite his unfounded suspicions, she comes across as a subservient wife, willing to relinquish her professional career so that she can fight for her marriage, though how she intends to do so is not clear at all. Such devotion to her husband metamorphoses her from an adulterous wife in the original into the quintessential role model of femininity propagated by the Francoist regime.

As the conversation unravels, further secrets are exposed. Knowing that neither Vincenzo nor his sister can have children and that they will mark the end of a long dynasty, Maria decides, out of love, to wilfully fall pregnant by her lover so that she can make Vincenzo happy with an heir. She plans to tell him the following day and is intent on having the baby no matter what. That evening, she will break up with her lover, who is unaware of Maria's pregnancy:

Example 8a. The pregnancy

<b>Original</b>	<p>Maria: What he would wish for more than anything else in the world is that neither he nor his sister nor I be the last.          Harry: As a wish!          Maria: It will come true.          Harry: What are you talking about?          Maria: I have made it come true.          Harry: You what? [...] Who knows?          Maria: Only you and I.          Harry: What about the father?          Maria: It is not his concern. The baby will be mine and my husband's.          Harry: Do you really believe that?          Maria: It will make Vincenzo happy. [...]          Harry: May I help you in any way? Who is going to tell him about it?          Maria: I am, of course.          Harry: When?          Maria: Tomorrow. It will be difficult for me.          Harry: Suppose just...He doesn't see it your way, what will you do?</p>
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Maria: What every other woman would do, I will have my baby.  
 Harry: What about... whoever he is?  
 Maria: That is all over. I am going to tell him now, tonight. That will not be difficult at all.

Yet again, such scabrous details could never pass the filter of the bigoted censors and the storyline had to be radically manipulated. The dubbed version decides to reinforce Maria's abnegate disposition towards her husband to the extent that she is portrayed as a devoted martyr in fear of her own life and of 'being the last contessa', as the count's passion and distrust keep mounting. In answer to Harry's suggestion to abandon her husband, she ratifies her marital love and desire to speak to Vincenzo:

Example 8b. The pregnancy

Dubbed	Back translation
María: Su pasión crece de día en día y con ella su desconfianza. Noto que hasta su hermana me trata de un modo extraño. Harry: Entonces... María: Tal vez sea verdad. Harry: ¿A qué te refieres ahora? María: A lo de ser la última condesa. Harry: ¿Cómo? [...] ¿Quién lo sabe? María: Sólo tú y yo. Harry: ¿Qué pasa con tu marido? María: Él sigue siendo el mismo. Yo ya sé que nunca va a cambiar. Harry: Entonces, ¿por qué no le dejas? María: ¿Es que no comprendes que le quiero? [...] Harry: ¿Puedo ayudarte de algún modo? ¿Quieres que vaya a hablar con él? María: Gracias, iré yo. Harry: ¿Cuándo? María: Mañana y sé que será difícil. Harry: Suponte por un momento que se aferra a sus sospechas, ¿qué harás después? María: Lo que haría toda mujer: continuar esperando. Harry: ¿Y si a pesar de todo no le convences?  María: En ese caso Harry, seguiré tu consejo de esta noche. Significará que todo ha concluido.	Maria: His passion grows day by day and with it his distrust. I feel that even his sister treats me in a strange manner. Harry: Then... Maria: Perhaps it is true. Harry: What are you referring to now? Maria: The fact of being the last contessa. Harry: How? [...] Who knows it? Maria: Only you and I. Harry: What about your husband? Maria: He continues being the same one. I already know that he is not going to change ever. Harry: Then, why don't you leave him? Maria: Don't you understand that I love him? [...] Harry: May I help you in any way? Do you want me to go to talk to him? Maria: Thanks, I will go. Harry: When? Maria: Tomorrow and I know it'll be difficult. Harry: Suppose for a moment that he sticks to his suspicions, what will you do afterwards? Maria: What every other woman would do: carry on waiting. Harry: And what if despite everything you don't convince him? Maria: In that case, Harry, I'll follow your advice of tonight. It'll mean that all is finished.

After the conversation has come to an end, Maria is driven away from Harry's hotel, unaware that she is being tailed by her husband, who has already discovered she is having an affair with the chauffeur. From the window of his hotel room, Harry realises the presence of the second car and, prompted by an ominous premonition, decides to follow them. Back in the count's residential palace, away from the camera, in a remote corner of the lavish house gardens, two gunshots are heard. The count appears through a door, under torrential rain, carrying the lifeless body of Maria in his arms, and avows his crime to Harry in the following terms:

Example 9a. Murders

<b>Original</b>	Vincenzo: She's dead, Mr Dawes, and so is he. I have known for some time that there was someone. It may be a questionable compliment but I did not suspect you even though Maria visited you tonight. What did she tell you? What did she say to you? [...] Harry: Did Maria have a chance to say anything to you before...? Vincenzo: No, what could she have had to say to me? Harry: Not a thing.
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In this scene, the dubbed version manipulates the dialogue and the soundtrack containing the sound effects, while also flaunting the expected synchrony between original and translation:

Example 9b. Murder

Dubbed	Back translation
Vincenzo: Está muerta, señor Dawes. La he matado yo. <b>Harry: Es a mí a quien fue a ver.</b> Vincenzo: He matado lo que más amaba. Sus palabras confirman mi error. Le parecerá un cumplido estúpido pero no sospechaba de usted. Era natural que María le visitase. ¿Qué le ha contado? ¿Qué le ha dicho? [...] Harry: ¿Cree usted ahora en la inocencia de María, Vincenzo? Vincenzo: Sí, y reconozco que lo que he hecho ha sido una locura. Harry: Es muy cierto.	Vincenzo: She's dead, Mr Dawes. I have killed her. <b>Harry: It was me whom she went to see.</b> Vincenzo: I have killed what I loved most. Your words confirm my error. You might think it's a stupid compliment but I did not suspect you. It was natural that Maria would visit you. What has she told you? What has she said to you? Harry: Do you believe now in Maria's innocence, Vincenzo? Vincenzo: Yes, and I acknowledge that what I have done has been a crazy thing. Harry: It is very true.

From a textual perspective, Vincenzo, blinded by jealousy and convinced that she has gone to see a man other than Harry, admits to having killed only his wife. To support his statement, the international soundtrack containing the sound effects has been clumsily altered so that the Spanish viewers can only hear one shot, followed by a short but perceptible awkward silence that accounts for the erasure not only of the second gunshot but also of the sound produced by the heavy rain. Taking advantage of the fact that Harry has his back to the camera, an utterance (bold line in Example 9b) has been added to the dialogue when in the original there was nothing but silence. Harry's insistence on the fact that he was the last person Maria had visited works as a harbinger of the count's admission of his error, when he acknowledges that *sus palabras confirman mi error* [your words confirm my error]. The frustrating revelation in the original that Maria did not have a chance to confess her secret to Vincenzo is again excised in its dubbed counterpart, where the stress falls again on reiterating Maria's innocence and highlighting the count's misguided act.

In the last example, Vincenzo rings the police and confesses to the two murders in Italian, as the action is meant to have taken place in that country. Given the linguistic proximity of the language to Spanish, and to avoid any risk of the Italian being understood by some viewers, the decision was taken to dub the utterances, rather surprisingly, into Italian, as linguistic verisimilitude is utterly inconsequential in the film. Content-wise, and to be consistent with the previous solutions, the dubbed version is forced to suppress the mention to the two victims, by resorting instead to a temporal reference:

Example 10. Police

Original version (Italian)	Back translation
Le consiglio di venire ad arrestarmi. Ho ucciso qualcuno. Mia moglie e un'altra persona.	I advise you to come and arrest me. I've killed someone. My wife and someone else.
Dubbed version (Italian)	Back translation
Le consiglio di venire ad arrestarmi. Ho ucciso mia moglie qualche minuto fa.	I advise you to come and arrest me. I killed my wife a few minutes ago.

All in all, through the ideological manipulation of the visual and the audio channels, and the cavalier disregard of synchrony between the original and the dubbed dialogue, the Spanish version of the film ends up being a travesty of the original in its anxious effort to become a mouthpiece of the repressive, despotic regime of the epoch.

#### 4. Final remarks

The Francoist propaganda used domestic and international cinema for the construction and transmission of its unique system of socio-political values and for the spreading of its own rancid mythology. Ultimately, it manipulated foreign films to legitimise its own myths by showing the Spanish population that people in other corners of the world also shared those same values. The case of *The Barefoot Contessa* is doubly controversial as not only is the plot in collision with the mores and morals preached by the dictator but the lead character is supposed to be Spanish and, hence, the authorities could not allow her behaviour to deviate from the strict female role sermonised by the regime. Arguably, her Spanish origin was a message that the regime was willing to exploit, to demonstrate to the rest of the population that the American dream was also in reach of national, talented artists like Maria Vargas. This could be understood as clear evidence that Spain was not as isolated or backward as some might claim, and the talent of its citizens was recognised and highly acclaimed beyond the national borders. But Maria's uninhibited, sexy, and promiscuous performance, which to some foreigners symbolises the stereotypical image of the passionate, carefree Spaniard, had to be reined in through changes to the dialogue and twists to the plot. Dubbed during the strictest period of censorship in Spain, the film thus became a battleground for ideological manipulation and forced the unleashing of a creative remediation process aimed at hiding any criticism of Spanish interests or customs as well as inculcating certain traditional morals like the submissive, obedient and resigned wife. In this sense, it is exemplary of the lengths to which translators and censors were prepared to go.

The original script has been entirely rewritten and if the dubbed version avoids touching on any taboo topics, it does so by sacrificing its internal coherence. As advised in one of the comments left on Amazon: 'best to watch it subtitled since this DVD contains the censored dubbed dialogue and there are things that you cannot understand, particularly at the end of the movie' ([www.amazon.es/Condesa-Descalza-Slim-DVD/dp/B007WR3L1Y](http://www.amazon.es/Condesa-Descalza-Slim-DVD/dp/B007WR3L1Y), my translation). Complete dialogue exchanges that either do not seem to make much sense or insist on ideas that further the agenda of the despotic authorities have been brazenly made up. As for the storyline, the fact that the conflict has mutated from adultery to domestic violence instigated by unfounded jealousy does not make the denouement less immoral, though it manages to displace the blame from the Spanish megastar to the *machista* Italian husband. Linguistic faithfulness to the original language is not the only casualty in the dubbing process and the actions of these censorial agents call into question certain assumptions that have been long treasured by academia. In the light of some of the examples presented in these pages, the straight-jacketing effect that lip-synchronisation and isochrony are meant to have upon the translated version needs to be re-evaluated and understood in a more relative manner.

If these nefarious changes could be somewhat justified on the basis of the historico-political context in which they took place, their perpetuation and commercial exploitation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is less defensible. Censorship in Spain was officially nullified in 1978, soon after the country embraced democracy. And yet, as the film was marketed by MGM in 2004 with the same dubbed dialogue exchanges as the ones used for its theatrical release in troubled 1956, it could be argued that censorship continues to cast a shadow over the industry in the digital age and that film distributors have (un)wittingly become the censors of the present by repackaging the old, mutilated dubbed translations. On the positive side, though still an area in need of further research, the subtitles of most of these classical productions seem to have fared better from a censorial point of view as, Spain being a country of dubbing tradition, the said subtitles were only produced for the first time for their release on digital media and were thus subject to less tampering by the powers that be. Or so would one hope.

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